

EXTENSION OF FEDERAL POWER ACT DEADLINE FOR
PROJECTS IN PENNSYLVANIA

MARCH 28, 1996.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State
of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. BLILEY, from the Committee on Commerce,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H.R. 2695]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 2695) to extend the deadline under the Federal Power Act applicable to the construction of certain hydroelectric projects in the State of Pennsylvania, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the bill as amended do pass.

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The amendment is as follows:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF DEADLINE.

(a) **EXTENSION.**—Notwithstanding the time limitations of section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806), upon the request of the licensee for the project concerned, and after reasonable notice, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission shall, in accordance with the good faith, due diligence, and public interest requirements of such section 13 and the Commission's procedures under such section, extend the time required for commencement of construction of each of the following projects until September 26, 1999:

- (1) FERC Project No. 4474.
- (2) FERC Project No. 7041.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—This section shall take effect for the project upon the expiration of the extension (issued by the Commission under section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806)) of the period required for commencement of construction of the project concerned.

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

The purpose of H.R. 2695 is to extend the deadline for the commencement of construction of two hydroelectric projects in Pennsylvania licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) until September 26, 1999.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. § 806 (1988)) establishes time limits for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project once FERC has issued a license. The licensee must begin construction not more than two years from the date the license is issued, unless FERC extends the initial deadline. However, section 13 permits FERC to grant only one extension of that deadline for "not longer than two additional years * * * when not incompatible with the public interests." Accordingly, FERC lacks authority to extend the deadline beyond a maximum of two years from the original deadline for commencement of construction. Therefore, a license is subject to termination if a licensee fails to begin construction within four years of the date the license is issued.

Lack of a power sales contract is the main reason construction of licensed hydroelectric projects has not commenced. It is very difficult for a hydroelectric project sponsor to secure financing until it has been granted a license, and once it has been granted a license the construction deadline begins to run. Without a power sales contract, a project generally cannot be financed. There are other obstacles to commencement of construction, such as protracted proceedings on a licensee's application for a dredge and fill permit from the Army Corps of Engineers under section 404 of the Clean Water Act. FERC has testified that in such cases it has issued orders staying the license until matters are resolved, suggesting that extension legislation is not needed in order to address delays beyond the control of the licensee. However, this does not apply to delays that are subject to the control of the licensee, such as lack of a power sales contract.

One reason it is difficult for project sponsors to obtain power sales contracts is the changing nature of the electric industry in the United States. As the industry has become more competitive, utilities are seeking to lower their costs and increase their flexibility. The terms of power sales contracts that finance hydroelectric projects range up to 25 to 30 years, and utilities are trying to avoid

purchase agreements with long terms. In addition, the generating cost of these projects may not be as favorable as other alternatives.

H.R. 2695 would extend the deadline for the commencement of construction for two hydroelectric projects (Project Nos. 4474, 7041) with capacities of 12 and 20 megawatts until September 26, 1999. This would extend the deadlines to up to ten years after the date the licenses were issued. The deadline for commencement of construction for both projects expired on April 15, 1995, but FERC has not yet issued an order terminating the projects. According to the project sponsors, construction has not commenced for lack of a power purchase agreement. To date, the licensees have invested over \$7 million in project development. H.R. 2695 does not ease the requirements of a hydroelectric license, but merely extends the period for commencement of project construction.

HEARINGS

The Subcommittee on Energy and Power held a hearing on the general subject of legislative extensions of hydroelectric construction deadlines, as well as specific bills to extend the deadline for individual projects on October 18, 1995. Testimony was received from Ms. Susan Tomasky, General Counsel, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. There were no legislative hearings held on H.R. 2695, which was introduced after the hearing, but written comments were provided by Ms. Tomasky in a letter to the Subcommittee dated December 11, 1995.

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

The Subcommittee on Energy and Power met in open markup session on March 5, 1996, and approved H.R. 2695, as amended, for Full Committee consideration by a voice vote, a quorum being present. The Full Committee met in open markup session on March 13, 1996, and ordered H.R. 2695 reported to the House, as amended, by a voice vote, a quorum being present.

ROLLCALL VOTES

Clause 2(l)(2)(B) of rule XI of the Rules of the House requires the Committee to list the recorded votes on the motion to report legislation and on amendments thereto. There were no recorded votes taken in connection with ordering H.R. 2695 reported. A motion by Mr. Bliley to order H.R. 2695 reported to the House, as amended, was agreed to by a voice vote.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS

Pursuant to clause 2(l)(3)(A) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Subcommittee on Energy and Power did not hold a legislative hearing on H.R. 2695. The Subcommittee held a legislative hearing on similar bills on October 18, 1995, received written comments on H.R. 2695 from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in a letter to the Subcommittee dated December 11, 1995, and made findings that are reflected in this report.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT

Pursuant to clause 2(l)(3)(D) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, no oversight findings have been submitted to the Committee by the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight.

NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY AND TAX EXPENDITURES

In compliance with clause 2(l)(3)(B) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee states that H.R. 2695 would result in no new or increased budget authority or tax expenditures or revenue.

COMMITTEE COST ESTIMATE

The Committee adopts as its own the cost estimate prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE ESTIMATE

Pursuant to clause 2(l)(3)(C) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following is the cost estimate provided by the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, March 18, 1996.

Hon. THOMAS J. BLILEY, Jr.,
*Chairman, Committee on Commerce,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has reviewed H.R. 2695, a bill to extend the deadline under the Federal Power Act applicable to the construction of certain hydroelectric projects in the state of Pennsylvania, as ordered reported by the House Committee on Commerce on March 13, 1996. CBO estimates that enacting the bill would have no net effect on the federal budget. The bill does not contain any intergovernmental or private sector mandates, and would have no direct budgetary impact on state, local, or tribal governments.

The bill would extend the deadline for construction of two hydroelectric projects currently subject to licensing by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). This provision may have a minor impact on FERC's workload. Because FERC recovers 100 percent of its costs through user fees, any change in its administrative costs would be offset by an equal change in the fees that the commission charges. Hence, the bill's provisions would have no net budgetary impact.

Because FERC's administrative costs are limited in annual appropriations, enactment of this bill would not affect direct spending or receipts. Therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply to the bill.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Kim Cawley.

Sincerely,

JUNE E. O'NEILL, *Director*.

INFLATIONARY IMPACT STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 2(l)(4) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee finds that H.R. 2695 would have no inflationary impact.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE STATEMENT

No advisory committees within the meaning of section 5(b) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act are created by this legislation.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS OF THE LEGISLATION

Section 1. Extension of deadline

This section directs FERC, upon the request of the licensees for Project Nos. 4474 and 7041, after reasonable notice, and in accordance with the good faith, due diligence, and public interest requirements of section 13 of the Federal Power Act and FERC's procedures under such section, to extend the time required for commencement of construction for such projects until September 26, 1999. The section will take effect upon the date of expiration of the extension previously granted by FERC.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE BILL, AS REPORTED

In compliance with clause 3 of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee finds that no changes in existing law are made by H.R. 2695.